



The Estaminet Times

Number 35
Spring 2019

HALIFAX
GREAT WAR
1914
HERITAGE SOCIETY

Contact Details

Newsletter Editor

Rob Hamilton

robhamilton@live.co.uk

Tel: 07793 463810

PR Officer

Alan Rhodes

alan.rhodes@talktalk.net

Tel: 01422 647457

Committee Members

Rob Hamilton (Chair)

Elaine Beach (Funding)

John Sunderland (Treasurer)

Ann Wilkinson (Secretary)

Graham Bradshaw (Minutes Secretary)

Rosemary Jones



LED BY IWM

The newsletter of the Halifax Great War Heritage Society
Commemorating the Great War Centenary

Editor's Notes

Welcome to another Newsletter and a belated Happy New Year to you all. As we enter a new year it will be interesting to see if interest in the Great War wanes after the commemoration of the centenary of the Versailles Peace Treaty in June.

Whatever the level of interest from the general public we intend to continue our work and schedule of talks to educate and entertain.

Our AGM will be held at our May talk and we would welcome any nominations for new committee members. We find that there are projects that we would like to initiate or be involved in but we are unable to because of lack of time. Any new members would be able to help with this.

How will the Peace Treaty be viewed by present day commentators? Did the Germans get their just deserts or was it overly harsh and a cause of the rise of National Socialism leading to the Second World War?



Monthly Talks

May 2018

A Shoebox of Letters

Christine Hodgson

As we all know, it is wrong to assume that every British serviceman had the same sort of experience in the Great War. In the case of Private Alvin Whiteley this was certainly not so. He was learning the wool trade in Bradford with his Great Uncle Sam when he was recruited into the Legion of Frontiersmen, 25th Battalion Royal Fusiliers. He saw active service in German East Africa and, after being invalided home, was serving with the Army Pay Corps when he was married at King Cross Wesleyan Chapel to “Miss Lilian Spencer the well known and highly-esteemed soprano” (as reported in the Halifax Courier on 27 October 1917).



Alvin was our speaker Christine Hodgson's grandfather. We were treated to a fascinating glimpse of his experiences as recorded in the many letters sent home to his mother Clara, treasured and stored in a shoebox.

June 2018
The Lady Globetrotter
Rob Hamilton



Following a late cancellation of the planned talk, our Chairman stepped into the breach and provided us with an account of the remarkable life of Mrs Harry Humphries, nee Elizabeth Yates.

Born in Halifax in 1883 and brought up in Luddenden, her adventures included emigrating to Canada, appearing on stage as Elsie Kelsey, marrying a Walter Mitty style con-man, accepting a \$10,000 wager to walk around the world, defending herself with a pistol in Russia, and finally fleeing from Germany at the outbreak of war in 1914.

Since our presentation, Lizzie Humphries has been featured in an exhibition at Bankfield Museum. Rob has given his well researched and entertaining talk to the Halifax Antiquarian Society and there are plans to produce a biography.

July 2018
Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians - a Heroine of
the Great War
David Glover

When I open a tin of beans, I know what to expect. “What has this to do with anything?” I hear you ask. Well, when I attend a talk given by David Glover, I also know exactly what to expect – a well researched, masterly presented, and highly interesting lecture.



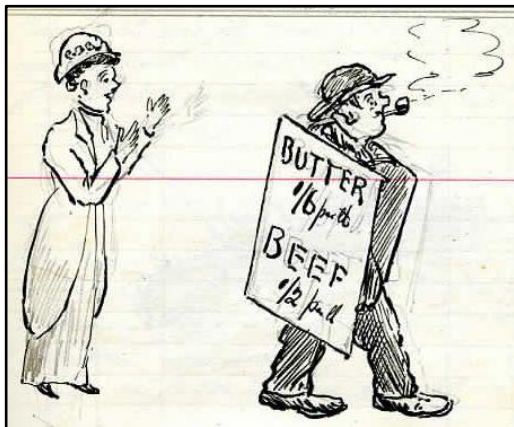
The newsletter of the Halifax Great War Heritage Society
Commemorating the Great War Centenary

With Queen Elisabeth as his topic, David had a story involving a Bavarian princess entirely committed to her husband and the Allied cause; and he provided a really fascinating evening's entertainment. Expectations thoroughly and greatly realised.

September 2018

Food – Shortages and Rationing

Elaine Beach



This was the second part of Elaine's discourse on the food situation during the Great War with special attention on the experience in Calderdale.

We were expertly taken to the world of our grandmothers where self-service was unheard of and the nearest thing to a shopping trolley was a perambulator. Shopkeepers wrote

to the local paper explaining their policies and problems and where the danger to our food supplies was the very real threat posed by the German U Boats.

Elaine will complete the story with *Food – the Final Years* later this year on Thursday 5 September. I have booked my seat.

October 2018

Blighty Island Discs

Alan Rhodes

Alan's brief was to follow the story of the Great War as reflected in the 78 rpm shellac records of the period. Featured songs included: *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, *Bravo Little Belgium*, *Paddy Maloney's Aeroplane*, *Now You've Got the Khaki On*, *Have You News of My Boy Jack*, *Women's Work*, *Over There*, *Lloyd*



George's Beer, Hunting the Hun, and Don't Let Us Sing About War Anymore with artistes such as Harry Lauder, Vesta Tilley, Marie Lloyd, Enrico Caruso, and Al Jolson. If you would like to hear some of this music please visit our website www.halifaxgreatwar.org and select "Entertainment" from the main menu.

A Decca Trench Gramophone from the period showed the volume and quality of sound that was achievable using just a clockwork motor, a metal needle, a sound box, acoustic engineering, and a grooved black 12 inch disc.

Apologies for the length of the show. A shorter second half is promised for 10 October 2019.

November 2018
The End of the War
Peter Liddle



It was very fitting that we marked the one hundred years of the signing of the Armistice with a visit from our patron. As always, it was a real pleasure to have Peter and Louise at The Old Mill.

From the 1960s, as a teacher, lecturer and historian, Peter began collecting original material and was very much in the forefront of recording the voices of veterans talking about their experiences. As a renowned and respected author, his publications cover subjects from both World Wars.

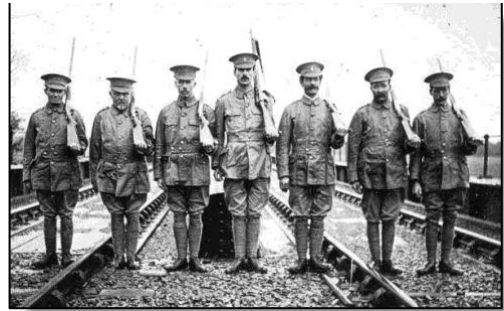
This depth of knowledge together with Peter's ability to hold an audience made his authoritative summary of The End of the War an occasion for all of us to remember.

January 2019

Grandad's Army: The Home Guard of World War One

Tim Lynch

Tim's latest visit to our Society produced a light-hearted but informative talk about the activities of volunteers who appeared not to be very dissimilar to the Second World War TV characters we know so well.



A couple of things that really surprised me were (1) that they paid for their own training and (2) that teenage Boy Scouts were issued with rifles whilst they were patrolling strategic locations.

Tim had done a great deal of local research for us. After war was declared, Colonel Thorold commanded the Halifax and District Volunteer Town Guard based at Highroad Wells Barracks. By September 1914, there were more than 1,000 volunteers in the area and the oldest was 80. The only requirement seemed to be to have just 20 minutes rifle training every week.

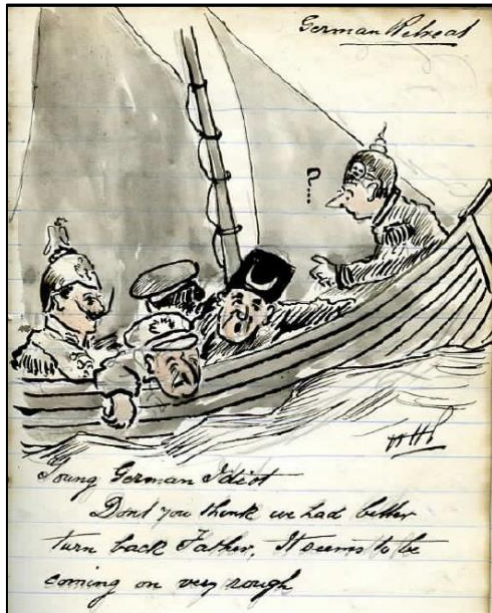
February 2019

The Stott Diary from 1918

Rob Hamilton

Our chairman treated us to another glimpse into the life of William Henry Stott via the entries and cartoons in his 1918 Diary (or rather a notebook that he was forced to use in the absence of his usual Lett's

Diary caused by the shortage of paper during the latter years of the War).



As for William and his wife (MJ) they still had the worry that their son might be conscripted into the army and it is quite evident from the entries in his diary that he, along with much of the public, was becoming very war weary. Finding labour to work in his business remained a problem and, to cap it all, the first wave of the influenza pandemic began to spread throughout the country. In spite of all this, the diary shows a grim resolve to see the war through. As always, we are grateful to the Stephen Gee Collection

for permission to reproduce the William Henry Stott drawings and diary entries.

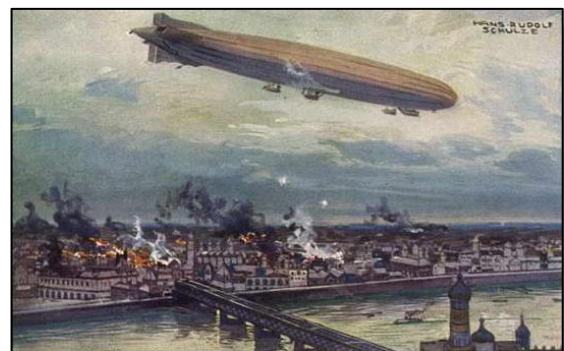
I cannot finish this review without saying “thanks” to Rob for all the work he puts into HGWHHS and to his wife Linda for supporting him.

March 2019

Z is for ... Airships, Zeppelin, man and machine

Jean Broadbent

Accompanied by her husband, Jean gave a well researched account of the development of airships from the use of balloons at the end of the Eighteenth Century, via observation balloons in the American Civil War, the pre-war work in Germany funded



The newsletter of the Halifax Great War Heritage Society
Commemorating the Great War Centenary

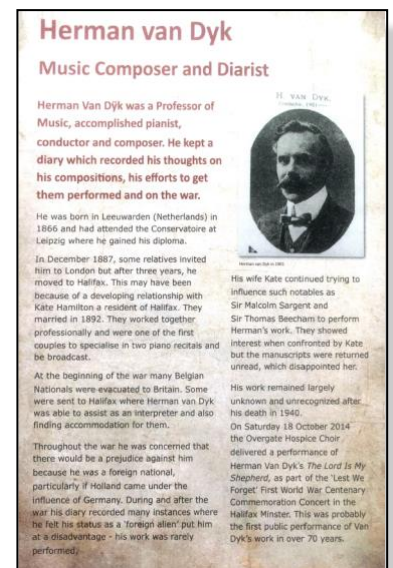
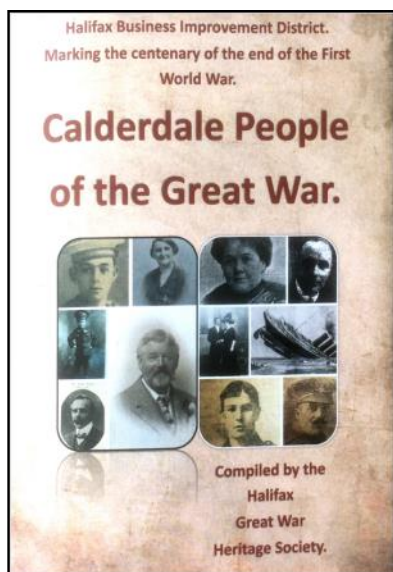
by Count Zeppelin, the bombing threat posed by Zeppelin and fixed wing aircraft on England, the post-war developments in Great Britain culminating in the R101 disaster of 1930, and the apparent eclipse of the airship era with the Hindenburg bursting into flames at Lakehurst USA in 1937.

However, the Broadbents had recently travelled on a modern airship and were full of admiration for this form of transport. Had they been selling tickets for a trip on an airship, we had at least one member who would have signed up on the spot. As it is, I am sure that “travel on a dirigible” is now on many audience members' bucket lists.

A thoroughly interesting and enjoyable evening. Thank You Jean.

Halifax BID

As we reported in our last edition Halifax Business Improvement District held an exhibition of display boards in the Borough Market to commemorate the centenary of the end of the war featuring information supplied by ourselves about local characters from the period. The exhibition was so well received that they commissioned a booklet with all of the stories. This has now been printed and is available, free of charge, from ourselves and Halifax Library. The following images are examples of the contents of the booklet.



The newsletter of the Halifax Great War Heritage Society
Commemorating the Great War Centenary

Feature

This edition's Feature is about Shelf in the Great War and comes from society member, author and historian Ben Stables. As well as creating the website 'Shelf History' Ben has also written a book about the early history of the village. Details can be found here.

<https://shelfhalifax.wordpress.com/page/>

'Soon this war shall end': Shelf during the First World War (1914-1918)

October 23, 2018 benstables



Marmaduke Holdsworth, the choirmaster at St Michaels Parish Church at Shelf, responded to the Boer War (1899-1902) with a hymn entreating God to intervene, whilst revealing some of his own insecurities about the war:

“Grant, Lord that soon this war shall end
And perfect peace return once more
And nations nevermore contend”

As it transpired, a much bloodier and deeper reaching conflict was on the horizon. On the 4th August 1914, War was declared with Germany.

The conflict would touch everyone in the village and everyone would have known at least one of the soldiers killed or their family.

The Village war memorial

The war had some other effects on life in the area. In 1917, an



aeroplane landed at Cooper Lane and the fascination for the young scholars was such that they had to be fetched away to attend school. In 1919 an airship passed overhead. Schools were involved in fund raising and sending eggs to wounded soldiers. War savings funds were also set up in some of the mills and at the council school, encouraging people to buy bonds that would benefit both the government and themselves. Social evenings and other fundraising events were held. The employees of Hind and Co. of Shelf Mills held a

‘social’ in the Church School in January 1916. Music (piano and violin) was provided for dancing and £9 was raised to be split between the Belgian Relief Fund and Shelf Distress Fund. A large part of Shelf Woods was felled to provide much needed timber and the tender flowers at Shelf Hall’s conservatory didn’t survive the winter frost due to fuel rationing. Towards the end of the War, Shelf Urban District Council were somewhat short sighted in fixing the price of milk higher than Bradford and almost all the other local villages. However, they proved themselves somewhat forward thinking when they declared that decimalisation of coinage was “not only desirable but absolutely essential that it should be adopted” in 1916.



A Garden Party at Shelf Vicarage during the war

A reporter at the Bethel Sunday School annual Whitsuntide treat in June 1916 reported that “the absence of young men was very evident, many having been called upon to serve their country elsewhere”. However, some local men were exempt from the prescription, having ‘certified occupations’ such as in schools or on farms. This was decided by a local ‘Shelf Tribunal’. One Shelf man (aged 23), a conscientious objector who had been a wool sorter, was handed over to a military escort and stated that “he did not acknowledge the charge against him”, that of evading military service.

As the war progressed, news filtered through of deaths during the conflict. Bombardier Charlie Hanson of Green Lane joined up in October 1914, prior to which he was a wool sorter at Bottomley’s Mill in Buttershaw. In July 1916, his fiancée Miss Ackroyd received a letter from two of his friends in the trenches:

“It is with deepest sympathy that we have to inform you that Charlie was killed yesterday, whilst doing his duty. He was struck by a shell whilst sitting under a parapet in the trenches and was killed instantaneously, suffering no pain. We were unable to get his belongings from him. He was well liked by all, and we trust you will accept our greatest sympathy.”

He was connected with Bethel Chapel and the same day the letter arrived, another had been delivered from Charlie to his friends at Bethel thanking them for a parcel he had received.

The Battle of the Somme raged from July to November 1916, the Shelf casualties might include Charlie Hanson and Fred Woodhead. Private Willie Mitchell was reported missing at the Somme but it was only discovered that he had been killed there by a shell some months later. There were a number of reported severe injuries, including George Gledhill of Shelf Moor, Campbell Holdsworth of Brow Lane, Edgar Petty of Riding Hill and Harold Foulds. Lieutenant W B Taylor of Green Lane survived being wounded at the Somme but was killed after he rejoined his regiment in 1917. Harold W Rhodes died of a bayonet wound received in action on Easter Monday 1917, probably during the Battle of Arras. Corporal John Hanson Shaw was killed at Ypres in 1915, and his Lieutenant Harold Shaw died at Esquelbecq in 1918, about 15 miles from each other. The war was raging further afield than France. Captain Taylor, who had worked at Shelf Sanatorium, was wounded at Sheikh Sa'ad in modern day Iraq in 1916 and returned home.



For many of the bereaving families, they had no grave to visit. Only a handful of the Shelf soldiers were to be buried in their home village. Private Fred Whittaker, formerly a greengrocer of Cross Lane, was wounded in France and invalided home. He died at Wharnecliffe War

Hospital in Sheffield on 31st October 1917. His funeral, was one of only a few held in the village for the war dead, and when the hearse passed through the village on its way to Bethel Chapel “all along the way through Stone Chair and Shelf the blinds were drawn, showing the deep respect with which he was held.”

Some soldiers were invalided ‘home’ for treatment and their relatives could be given passes to allow them to travel to the various war hospitals around the country. Shelf Sanatorium, which opened in 1914 for patients with tuberculosis, was used for recuperating soldiers. At Christmas 1916, the Sanatorium wards “were decorated with festoons of evergreens” for a musical concert for “the inmates, several of whom were unable to leave their beds.” Sergeant Adams, a patient of the Sanatorium who was recently invalided home from Gallipoli, provided “uproarious merriment” with his appearance as “a love-sick lady appealing to the Matron for her ‘Edwin’, and carrying him off”.



Whilst the war dead were to be memorialised both in the village and abroad, many of the other local soldiers who survived the conflict are less easy to trace. Besides the painful stories around soldiers from Shelf, there were also stories of great bravery and strength in the direst of circumstances. In 1918, Corporal Wilson Barker, an only child from Cock Hill Lane, was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry. He

worked as a runner and “during the advance, he constantly carried messages to the forward platoons under the heaviest machine gun and rifle fire, showing the utmost fearlessness” on one occasion even carrying a supply of bombs with him.

The various War Memorials of Shelf’s Churches and Chapels record the names of 81 young men who died in the Great War. The plaque at St Michael’s has 48 names, with a further 15 for Witchfield Chapel, 13 for Bethel Chapel and 5 for Wade House Chapel. Stained glass windows at St Michael’s commemorate the war dead and act as “a thank offering for others who returned” depicting the Angel of Peace and St George sheathing his sword. Another window was installed in memory of John Hanson Shaw and Harold Shaw; the two brothers from Shelf who were killed in France, both windows were unveiled in 1920. The Village War Memorial was completed after seventeen years of discussion, and unveiled on the 28th September 1935.

Ben Stables

Author of ‘The Early History of Shelf: A West Yorkshire Village before 1700’

Website: shelfhalifax.wordpress.com